THE

INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY,

VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF

DIVINE TRUTH.

A Lecture delivered in the City Hall, Portland, Sunday Evening, March 17, 1861.

BY WILLIAM B. HAYDEN.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

PORTLAND:
PRINTED BY DAVID TUCKER.
NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON & CO.
1861

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

THE
BUFFALO
HISTORY
MUSEUM

LECTURE.

"And Jesus answering, said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."—Mark, xii. 17.

For several months we have been passing through a political crisis that will form a memorable era in our annals. Little doubt can be entertained that it will have an important influence on our future as a people, and on the destiny of our government. The permanency of our institutions has been threatened. The nation's heart has been stirred to its core; and some of the strongest feelings, both of antagonism and fraternity, have been called into exercise. No man, and especially, no Christian man, who loves his country could stand by and look on altogether unmoved.

In the extraordinary character of this event, will be found my apology, if apology be needed, for departing, for once, from an otherwise uniform course of avoiding the discussion of such topics in the pulpit, and for a single hour regarding the subject from a moral point of view.

And as men's minds now, more than usual, are directed to civil matters, a favorable opportunity is presented to contemplate some of our duties as members of the commonwealth, to view these relations as seen in some degree of spiritual light, and to avail ourselves of the doctrines of the church alike to aid us in the formation of correct opinions and in shaping our conduct aright.

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

The subject of *Slavery* comes up to be viewed—the central irritating point in the present contest, and the one great problem which perhaps the issues of this crisis are destined to solve.

In the brief remarks we have to offer, it is proposed to consider this subject in the light of a few general principles, and of a few broad facts, simple, and manifest to all.

1. The first truth I desire to call attention to is that, *God leads different communities in different ways.*

The meaning of this proposition may become more apparent as we proceed.

Take the map of the world and cast your eyes over it for a moment. There is China and here is Great Britian; here is New England, and there is Patagonia; and there are Germany and Turkey; India and France; Russia and Africa. What difference of character! and with what diversity of institutions do we find the nations endowed! One people has Buddhism for its religion; another, Brohminism; a third, Mohammedanism; a fourth is immersed in Fetishism; while the light of Christianity sheds its rays in widely differing degrees (of obscurity or of brilliancy) over the more civilized portions of the globe.

Then look at their governments. One people enjoys an extreme of freedom verging on lawless license; another willingly submits to the restraints of constitutional order in a republic or a limited monarchy; over a fourth a single autocrat reigns supreme; a fifth bows its head to a despotism still more rigid and irresponsible; while others yet, deprived of all political existence, are doomed to a helpless and degrading bondage.

And if we inspect these communities a little more closely we shall find the social varities equally great. The structure of society differs in every one of them; as do also manners and customs, intellectual culture and moral development; as well as occupations and natural products.

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

And yet the Divine Providence is over all these as much as it is over us; and is leading them in their ways as truly as it is leading us in ours. The Being who is mercy itself and wisdom itself, who has all power in heaven and on earth, whose Hands touch the very springs of all action, and who minutely superintends every movement in the world's affairs,—suffers all these differences to exist, and, to a superficial observation, seems in no haste to remove them. He gave the Word of God to the Jew, but withheld it from the gentile; and now sends the gospel to the Englishman, while keeping it from the Turk, and shutting it out of Japan. Instead of attaching the steam car of (some modern ideas of) progress to the train of political and social reform, He allows it to drag its slow length along through the ages retarded by the heavy brakes of a stiff and unyielding conservatism.

Why is it that our Heavenly Father treats his children, seemingly, with such different degrees of His favor?

A complete answer is found to this question in some of the simplest truths of the Christian Religion. The Lord regards eternal, and not temporal ends in all the ways of His Providence. Hence, not the worldly elevation, but the spiritual salvation of the nations is the first object to which His operations are directed.

The final happiness or true state of man consists in willing conformity to the laws of Divine Truth. Every disorder we witness comes from a want of such conformity. And the problem of the world's history is to bring men into this conformity. First, their spiritual regeneration is to be wrought out; and, secondly, that regeneration is to be wrought out while they are in perfect moral freedom.

Now, in this double proposition just stated, we have the key which unlocks all the apparent mysteries in the divine providences, and in the divine permissions. Every spiritual good comes to man through willing obedience to revealed

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

heavenly truth, and through no other medium. Hence God's revelations of his truth are tempered to men's states. He at no one time reveals the whole, but in each age, and to each people, reveals just so much as the aggregate mind of that age or that people can begin to conform to in freedom. Europe has the Gospel given to it, because many minds in Europe have reached such a degree of development as to be willing to acknowledge its light, and yields a degree of obedience to its precepts. And through them it can be made operative of benefit to the whole. But the moral will of China is too weak to impose upon itself the restraints required by the purity of its doctrines. They could not conform in freedom. The presence of so much light, while they continued to sin against it, would only involve them in so much the greater condemnation; and so it is mercifully withheld by their Heavenly Father. Each people has a Religion allowed it adapted to its state. While the religion allowed is the one so fitted to their genius as to insure the highest degree of spiritual life they are morally capable of attaining.

And so it is with every other good thing under heaven: good government, and bodily freedom, among the rest. They are given as soon as a wise use can be made of them, tending to spiritual regeneration; but mercifully withheld from every people whose unrestrained passions would abuse them, turning them from a blessing into a curse.

We, in our human superficiality, looking on the outside of things, and perceiving the *hardships* under which so much of humanity is struggling, have our benevolent feelings powerfully stirred, and at once set about some reform. We are too apt to charge the whole difficulty to certain external conditions, or to some specific outward institution. And we are liable, too, to fall into the fallacy of mistaking the *hardships* under which a people groan for real evils.

But the Lord, and the angels who work with Him in re-

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

forming and elevating men, looking on the inward states, and not alone on the outward conditions, see better than we do where the whole difficulty lies. The *real evil* consists in the wrong dispositions within, while the outward conditions are only effects, the necessary results of the degradation within. Hence as viewed in spiritual light, the outward hardships, so far as divinely permitted, are good things, and not evils. They are disciplinary, and useful inflictions, tend ing to bring about the very results Divine Providence is aiming at.

As soon as through these preliminary disciplines, the Lord can bring a people into a state for accepting and obeying a higher degree of truth, the truth finds them out. It comes to them, sometimes from above, sometimes from the Church established elsewhere, sometimes from the Church among themselves. And as they begin to obey it, their condition begins to change ; better institutions are given, more freedom is enjoyed. Only so comes the true reform.

To illustrate more plainly the meaning and application of some of these abstract statements, take one or two familiar instances. There is the freedom of the press, which we regard as so inestimable a blessing, and for the enjoyment of which we all should be willing to sacrifice so much. But the great French nation, a people whom we so highly respect, has for many years past been, by its government, deprived of this boon ; while the French Emperor has been loudly denounced for the restriction, on this side of the Atlantic. We know not, of course, the selfishness or unselfishness of the motive which prompted this line of policy, nor can we presume to dogmatize as to the precise degree of fitness that nation possesses for the enjoyment of such privileges. But we have no doubt that if the whole truth were known it would be seen that, if all restriction were taken off, and as much freedom given as is allowed with us, his administration would be destroyed in a

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

few months, and that no stable government could long survive; so great would be the excitement and disorder which unprincipled men playing upon the passions and prejudices of the multitude might succeed to produce in that community.

The *elective franchise* is another highly prized privilege, which with us is universally extended, and which would not be relinquished by us without the utmost reluctance on the part of the popular mind. But suppose this system were transferred to the empire of Russia, and the masses of her serfs endowed with it to the same extent as the masses of New England. We suppose it will be generally conceded that the experiment would be extremely hazardous; the probability being that it would be decidedly detrimental, leading to insubordination and revolution, inaugurating a worse condition for all the interests of civil and moral progress than now exists under the despotism of the Czar.

Thus we see that the good or evil of certain institutions, and civil privileges, is not absolute, but relative; good here, but bad yonder.

The law of Divine Providence in this respect, so far as we are able to deduce it, seems to be that, as soon as one of these higher privileges will on the whole, produce more good than evil, the reform is allowed to take place; but when it would occasion more evil than good, it is withheld, and constantly deferred until the proper state has been prepared.

The Lord never *provides* evil, in any case, He only permits it, for the sake of the moral freedom of man and his subsequent regeneration; providing the limitations by which it is held in check, overruling it to useful results, contrary to the intent and beyond the knowledge of the evil doer. Nor is any bad condition of society, in any part of the world, permitted to exist but for the sake of preventing some greater evil;—out of sight to *human* eyes, perhaps, but in perfect view of the Divine.

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

We now hear much said about this 19th century, its light and its progress, its vast achievements and superior character, and there seems to be an impression that whatsoever is contrary to the spirit of this new age has no right any longer to exist. There is great and powerful truth in all this. But while we acknowledge the truth and act upon it, we must yet remember that although the 19th century is here, the other centuries have not altogether gone away. In many important respects they are with us still. The ages that are past all stand ranked around us to-day, in serried columns, one behind another, in the great amphitheatre of the nations; and it would require no very long or laborious journey for a man to reach any one of them he might choose. In Russia he might find one of the medieval christian ages, in Mexico, perhaps, another. In the Ottoman empire he could go back to a time before Christianity had dawned, or in the valley of the Ho-ang-ho might set himself down in the midst of a civilization whose date is earlier than the days of Moses. Scarcely a state through which humanity has passed, since sin set its mark upon our race, from the lowest savageism to the highest Christian culture, that does not find its living representatives to-day, full in our sight, somewhere on the earth's surface.

Now the dealings of the Divine Providence with these different classes of men have not changed, they are the same with these men now, that they were with the similar classes in the ages that are gone.

We have brought into view the panorama thus briefly presented, not with a design to palliate any great evil or wrong, to militate against genuine ideas of progress, nor to abate in the least an honest and true ardor in the great cause of real reform. But these facts have been suggested as a preface, to enable us to contemplate the subject before us in its connections, to see things as they really are, viewing them in their relations to each other; to escape exaggeration, and to tone

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

down those feelings of special hostility which naturally arise when some single disorder becomes the sole object of sight.

It has been well said, by a distinguished philosopher, that a grain of sand held close to the eye may be made to shut out of view the whole universe beyond; and likewise a single object of thought kept continually before the mind becomes exaggerated in its proportions, shutting from view other facts and considerations equally true and equally important.

We are now prepared to devote a few moments to the subject of Slavery. Much has been written to show that the Bible approves of slavery; and as much perhaps to prove that it does not, but rather condems it, in its whole tone and spirit. Perhaps there is not so much real difference of opinion in these writers as would appear from the opposite sides they take in this controvesy: but we have not seen any thing in print which has altogether satisfied us on this point. The treatises wear too much a partizan aspect. Either everything is made to tell in favor, or else everything is made to go against the system.

The character of the servitude established among the Israelites has been much discussed.

Let us pause a moment and take a glance at that system, as it stands exhibited in the laws Divinely given through Moses.

First, a foreign slave trade, which should be made the instrument of subjugating a people not already enslaved is peremptorily forbidden. "And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death." (Ez. 21, 16). There was, however, a species of foreign trade of this kind which the Jews were permitted to have. They were allowed to purchase such as were already in bondage, of their heathen neighbors. And they were allowed also to buy of their parents the children of heathen sojourning among them, who were in the habit of selling their offspring into servitude. This statute is found in Levit. 25,

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

44—46. "Both thy bondmen and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen forever."

The Divine Truth, in the process of its revealment, is graded to man's capacity to bear. As much restraint is thrown around the self-will of a people as can be done, and still leave them in the freedom of moral action. And foreseeing that,—from the character of the times in which they lived, the circumstances by which they were surrounded, and their own native dispositions,—they *would have slavery*, the system was allowed them; while it was hemmed round and restrained by some very important enactments; which were provisions of goodness and benefit, both to the servile and to the governing class. For instance, the statute that has just been read,—while it permits the *purchase* of slaves is a provision of *mercy* to both parties concerned. Left to *themselves*, the Israelites would have enslaved *each other*, making merchandise of their own brethren, as did the nations around them, and as they themselves did to a limited extent and for short periods. But this statute rescued the *Hebrew* from *perpetual* service, substituting in his stead a more degraded and abject race. On the other hand, it transferred the *slave* (so bought) from the more intolerable rigors of a *heathen* bondage, where he would be left to the unrestrained oppressions of the master, to one of a milder type, where were thrown round him innumerable social privileges, together with all the safeguards of wise and beneficent law.

Under the Jewish code, (Ex. 21, 20), the servant was pro-

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

tected, not only as to life and limb, but also from excessive punishment. For if the master destroyed an eye, or so much as smote out a tooth, the bond servant was allowed his or her freedom. (Ex. 21, 26–7 .). The virtue of the *female* slave was protected against the lust of the master : and in cases where the statute was violated, he was obliged either to take her to be his wife, or to let her go forth free; he was no longer allowed to make merchandise of her. (Deut. 21, 14.) By this act, as will be perceived, her offspring of course became free.

In addition to these restrictions, their heathen bond men were entitled to all the privileges of the Jewish church. They were instructed in what the Jews knew about religion. They were exempted from labor on the Sabbath, according to the commandment; they enjoyed the respite granted to the whole population during the numerous national festivals, amounting to nearly one-fourth, some authorities say one-third, of the time ; and they were permitted to eat of the passover with the rest of the family. In short, they were throughout regarded as persons, and protected as persons, and never treated merely as property, or things. The theory of the law was that they were *persons held to service.* It was their *labor* which belonged to their masters, but not their *persons*. It was a property similar to that which the laws of the State of Maine, and we presume of all the free States, give to every parent in the services of his children before they are legally of age, and which subjected them to the same civil disabilities. In other words, under the Mosaic system, the heathen servant was simply a legal *minor*, or apprentice, all the days of his life.

Such was the property that was guarded by the Jewish law, and recognized in the tenth commandment of the decalogue, where we are told not to covet our neighbor's man-servant or his maid servant, or any thing that is his.

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

Again:—The Israelites had what may be called a *fugitive slave law.* That is, they were bound to return to each other the servants running from their masters, or fleeing from service, as they were bound to return any other kind of property straying or lost. This regulation extended throughout all the tribes, from Dan to Beersheba: as with us, through all the States of the Union. The runaway could be reclaimed as far as the jurisdiction of the central government extended. (Deut. 22, 3; I. Sam. 30, 15; I. Kings, 2, 38, 39, 40, 43.)

On the other hand, they were prohibited from returning a slave to his master in a foreign country. If a runaway, escaping from heathen bondage in any of the nations round about them, sought refuge within their borders, his rendition was not allowed, they were to extend to him the full protection of their laws. Even as with us, a slave escaping into Canada is not given up by the British government; nor should *we* return one who had succeeded in coming to us from Brazil, or Cuba, or any other foreign jurisdiction. This law is addressed to the nation as a whole, and is found in Deut. 23, 15, 16. "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which has escaped from his master unto thee: he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in the place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him." Some have supposed, that at the year of Jubilee, *all* servants among the Jews were released from service; but this appears to be a mistake. That law, we believe, operated in favor of only the *Hebrew* servants, relieving them from any unexpired portion of their term of six years. While to the *heathen* slave held to Jewish service, no year of Jubilee ever came; his children descended to their children as a perpetual inheritance.

We believe that the precepts of the Bible and the operations of Providence have for their Author one and the same Divine Being, and that the two will be found to flow together in the

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

utmost harmony and consistency; that both concur in pointing out to us the same mode of treatment in relation to the subject of slavery. And as we read them, neither of them counsel us to lay violent hands on the institution itself. They concur in tolerating it. Divine Revelation nowhere speaks of servitude, or of the simple relation of master and servant, as objectionable, as out of order, or as a relation necessarily injurious either to the governing or to the servile race. On the contrary, both Scripture and Providence recognize the system as having a certain function to fulfil in the upward movement of the races.

But the moment the divine precepts fall upon it they begin to modify it in every one of its relations. They denounce every sin whatsoever, and of course forbid every wrong that may be sought to be committed under the system. Would a man, taking advantage of his position of master, make use of his authority to oppress his inferiors, all the provisions of the law are against him. He is bound to keep every one of the commandments, and in keeping them he would be obliged to refrain from every evil that, in other cases, is perpetrated in connection with the system. He could not indulge in cruelty, nor punish with great severity, nor make merchandise of his own children by a slave mother. The whole tendency of the Bible teachings is to melt away, one after another, every unhallowed feature, until the relation is reduced to one simple function; for which and for which alone it seems designed in the Divine economy of history; that is, to teach a weak, ignorant and indolent people, the lessons of obedience and useful work, and all the other lessons necessary to its social elevation. When it fails to do this,—when it ceases to be a medium of elevating the servile race,—of endowing them with a better civilization and reducing them to a better moral order, then it is out of its place; it is no longer doing the work Providence designs for it, and all the Divine laws are against it.

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

But look at it a moment, supposing it were existing anywhere in the form, and under all the conditions and regulations which these Precepts enjoin. We should then behold it with all its evils removed. Instead of a wicked and oppressive master, cruelly driving his dependents about as mere slaves, and working them with rigor solely for his own benefit, we should have a patriarchal relation, in which the master, while claiming obedience and service, would be nothing more than the legal guardian and instructor of weak and inferior, but yet of attached and loyal, dependents. Care, restraint, protection and instruction would be bestowed by the wise and the strong upon the ignorant and the weak, while willing service and affectionate obedience would come to be yielded on the part of the other.

Such we believe to have been the relation that existed between Abraham and his dependents;—those "servants," some of whom were "born in his own house," while others of them had been "bought with his money." Now this, so far from being a wicked relation, we can on the other hand conceive of its being, under some circumstances, even now, a good one. Where, for instance, it were made the instrument of lifting a race like the African, out of ignorance and barbarism and indolence, into some knowledge, and civilization, and moral order, and habits of industry. It might become, in right hands, one of the mightiest civilizers ever known; requiring on the part of the master, however, firm principle, and the highest moral rectitude. For the *benefit of the inferior race* must needs be constantly one of his main purposes. Such a system could not properly be called *slavery*, nor even *bondage*, in any bad sense, but rather a legal and beneficent tutelage. The preparation for freedom would be continually going on; and when the time should arrive for the legal relation to cease, complete emancipation would be an easy process. For the master, having no property in the person of his ser-

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

vant, having bestowed upon him about as many benefits as his labor was worth, would be willing to act wisely and do what was best; while the servant on his part having benefited by his kindly training, would be prepared to take upon himself all the functions of manhood, and to make a good use of his freedom.

It has been well said by another, that, when the Lord purposes to do any given thing, He first makes the most thorough preparation for it, and when such preparation has been made, then the specific change seems to come almost as a matter of course. The suggestion, we think, is one that is calculated to lead us to wise counsels in every department of important action.

If it should so happen, that for some urgent reason, an *iceburg* were to be destroyed, in some portion of the northern seas, some men, especially if they were only partially instructed men, might, in the ardor of their enterprize, think it the best method to assail it at once where it lay; to set upon it by main force, with hammers and pick axes, and crow bars, and other similar weapons of offence, with a view of knocking it to pieces with the utmost possible despatch. And they might succeed in cleaving off many projecting portions, scattering their shining fragments about them. But we know that if the cold did not abate, their labor would be all in vain; the fragments so chipped off would remain as solid as before, while the ice in the main mass would in the meanwhile continue to make. While the Divine method of destroying an iceberg, as that method operates in nature, is to treat it by a gentler process; to float it away to a milder clime and a softer air; to bear it down on the slow currents of the ocean, until its sides are bathed in the warm waters of the gulf stream, while on its domes and roof are poured the gentle rays of a summer's sun. And then, in no long time, we shall behold the huge obstacle gradually betake itself away from human

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

sight, as if by an inward law and of its own accord. It makes no resistance; but spire after spire, and turret after turret, abdicates its power and descends from its throne, as if moved thereto by a consenting will of its own, until, without noise, without confusion, without untoward disturbance of any kind, the whole mass has disappeared from view; and in a little while we shall seek for any traces of it in vain.

Similar to this, we believe, is the Lord's method of removing from any community, when His precepts are obeyed, a state or condition of society belonging to a past age, and which therefore, in His Providence, is to give place to a higher. Not by demolition, from without, but rather through regeneration from within, by the silent influences of His love and truth. To abolish simply an *institution* suddenly does not remove the evil state in which the wrongs of an institution originate; it is the state of mind and heart and life that need modification and softening first, and as soon as this is effected all needed reforms follow as a matter of course.

From this principle flows the treatment which the system of slavery received at the hands of the writers of the New Testament. As is well known, the Christian Religion was first promulgated in a slave-holding community. The gospel encountered the institution the moment it went beyond the borders of Judea, and very probably before. And for three hundred years the primitive churches gathered into their folds, indiscriminately, masters and slaves, in the same congregation, wherever they went. And while the early church was loud against all the great national sins of the Græco-Roman world,—its idolatry and paganism, its theatres and games,—no word was raised against the institution of slavery. But when questioned in relation to it, the uniform advice of the Apostles was obedience and acquiescence on the part of the servant, and leniency and Christian kindness on the part of the master. Listen to what Paul says in the seventh chapter of

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

the first Epistle to the Corinthians. We read it in the new, revised translation of Conybeare and Howson.

"Only let each man walk in the same path which God has allotted to him, wherein the Lord has called him. This rule I give in all the churches. Thus,—if any man, when he was called, bore the mark of circumcision, let him not efface it; if any man was uncircumcised at the time of his calling, let him not receive circumcision. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obedience to the commandments of God. Let each abide in the condition wherein he was called. Wast thou in slavery at the time of thy calling? Care not for it. Nay,—though thou have power to gain thy freedom, rather make use of thy condition. For the slave who has been called in the Lord is the Lord's freedman; and so also, the freeman who has been called, is Christ's slave. He has bought you all; beware lest you make yourselves the slaves of man, [i. e. by a servile adherence to mere party leaders.*] Brethren, in the state wherein he was called, let each abide with God." (Vol. 2, pp. 46, 47.)

Similar is the instruction given in the five or six other places in the various epistles where the subject is treated. The language of the Bible, everywhere, seems to be, "Of what moment is it that you do endure hardships? All men endure hardships, each one according to his spiritual needs, in the view of Divine Providence, and some of the best of men even to martyrdom. Of what moment, then, are the varieties of condition which end with life here? These fleeting and transitory things are like a drop in a bucket, or as the small dust in the balance, in comparison with those eternal benefits which the infinite love of your Heavenly Father is working out for you, through these very means."

* Conybeare & Howson's note:—"Alluding to their servile adherence to party leaders." Compare 2 Cor. 11, 20.

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

Thus the Religion of our Lord Jesus Christ does not attack the legal relation of master and servant; it wages no war directly, with the system itself; but descending into it with the healing influences of its divine precepts and its heavenly love, melts out of it every abuse and every sinful practice, leaving the institution, thus renovated, to wear out according to the operation of great physical and economic laws, when, in the view of Providence, the state has been prepared, both in the minds of the governed and of the governing class, for it to disappear.

The truth is, that the system of *servitude* is not a sin, *absolutely*, as murder and theft and false witness are sins,—which are sins at all times and in all places, and are forbidden by the precepts of every religion under heaven; but it is a sin only *relatively*, according to the conditions of society by which a man is surrounded, and the degree of light in which he lives. It is one of the divine disciplines, having a function to perform in the historic renovation of the races, relatively good, where nothing else will meet the stern requirements of the case, and bad only where it has fulfilled its office or outlived its time. It may be carried on in such a way as to be exceedingly sinful; while it may be continued in, where it already exists, in such a way as to be not sinful. Originating, indeed, in the evil passions of men, but, overruled for good, and destined in the end to be wholly removed by the spirit and operation of Christian truth.

The one great lesson which God would teach all people, in every age, and in all conditions, is *obedience;* and it is for this that they are led in so many crooked ways and over so many rugged paths. While the human mind is undeveloped as to rationality or reasoning powers, and in a merely propensive or wilful state, *forced* obedience to outward regulations is its proper and wholesome regimen. By means of this imposed restraint, a ground is prepared in the individual for self-

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

restraint in after years. By being obliged to conform to outward rule in an unreasoning state, the mind is taught how to control itself and yield willing obedience when the rational perceptions are opened and reason assumes the sway. Hence it is the Divine provision that all men should be subject to this outward rule and government during the ages of childhood and youth; while the affectional nature is predominant, and the understanding and its powers only in the process of forming. Control over them is given to the parents, until such time as by the development of their rationality, they are endowed to act for themselves. This early lesson of subjugation seems absolutely necessary, for the eternal welfare of man; and is guarded by many and important divine sanctions. Obedience to parents is one of the commandments of the decalogue; and our Lord himself, as we read, remained, during his minority, subject to the parental authority of Joseph and Mary. And we read in the Prophet, that "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth."—[Lam. 3. 27.

Now it appears from all history, as well as from the Bible, as though God regarded the childhood of nations and of races, somewhat as he does the childhood of the individual, imposing upon them, in the orderings of His Providence, during their intellectual nonage, the restraints of an analogous subjection and authority. Nearly every people that we know of has passed under the yoke. Indeed, may we not say all? for is there any race or nation, which has arrived at any degree of development, or is capable of sustaining civilization, that has not at some period of its history, been subjected to bondage, serfdom or vassalage of some kind? Even the chosen people were left in Egypt for three hundred years before they were taken out. It seems to be the only discipline sharp enough to pierce through and break up the strata of savagism in the human breast, opening the soil for

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

the seeds of truth and order. Certain people have more docility of disposition and a greater native adaptation to it than others. Some few races, like those of our American Indians, that cannot be subjected to it, and therefore cannot be taught obedience, are hence almost incapable of civilization, and in all probability must in no long time, perish in their isolated barbarism. Bondage or annihilation, appears to be the dread alternative that is offered to every savage people as soon as it emerges from the shade, and plants its feet within the programme of universal history. Through the door of servitude or of subordination, may be opened to it a way for salvation and the highest culture, which, if missed, destruction only awaits it; thenceforward it must dissolve and disappear.

In the first ages the wicked passions of men are set off against each other. One brutal race, of superior mental energy, rules over another equally or more brutal, but less endowed with intellectual vigor. It is not needful that I draw a picture of slavery as it is practiced among heathen and barbarous nations; it would only be revolting to all our finer feelings, and is already sufficiently well understood; while it is altogether more grateful to our moral sentiments to dwell on the contemplation of those modifying influences which the light of Divine truth brings upon the system, the moment it is allowed to shine upon it.

To bring these teachings home, what, then, is our duty, as citizens of these Northern States, in view of the existence of slavery in the South? To *our* mind, the answer seems clear. In one sense, we are to let it alone; while in another, we may do much—very much for the benefit both of master and slave.

We are to let it alone in every place where we have not proper civil jurisdiction over it. If it be asked how far we ought to consider our civil jurisdiction to extend? I answer, *that is a question which does not belong to the moralist to*

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

decide. It is a legal point. In some sense, it is a question of fact;—a provision of constitutional law, which belongs to the civil plane. It is for the constitutional lawyers,—the statesmen and jurists,—or the legal tribunals of the country to decide, or for authorized conventions to arrange. And every man must form his own opinion on the subject, taking sides as facts and circumstances in his judgment determine. The only point, in this connection, on which the moralist is called upon to speak, is simply to say that in the settlement of the *legal* question there is involved no conscientious question or scruple as to the rightfulness or wrongfulness of slavery itself. That is a point which ought not to come in to determine its settlement. The main point for conscientious consideration here, is to decide exactly according to the facts of the case; to do simple justice on the civil plane; to give them precisely what the law allows them; no more, no less. First, render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and then unto God the things that are God's. We cannot, while refusing to abide by the truths of a lower order, turn round and cloak ourselves under the plea of conscience with respect to the truths of a higher and distinct order. The sacred Scripture nowhere recognizes the rightfulness or purity of such a conscience. We can never advance the cause of truth and justice, or of sound morality, by withholding, even from a bad man, any of his legal rights. The criminal at the bar of justice, charged with murder, and tried for his life, has his rights, which the law secures to him at every step of the process. And when he has been found guilty, they do not cease; the protecting arm of the law is around him still, protecting him from mob violence, as well as from any and every indignity or injury, except alone the single one which the law itself points out.

And so, too, slaveholding communities have their rights, or legal privileges and immunities, which we are all bound to respect; without reference to the sinfulness or unsinfulness of

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

the institution; to respect, not merely as a matter of expediency, or state policy, but as a part of that general fealty and obedience which we all owe to the unchanging requirements of divine truth. For look a moment at the wide distance between the two provinces of action. Civil law, in its last resort, rests upon force. While the moral plane of action is one of free thought and reflection. There is a natural tendency in the human mind to disregard this distinction, and to run into the employment of force in cases where moral reasoning would be the only proper instrument. Men *have* sought, in times past, to propagate religious truth and moral reform, by the arm of the law, or civil power. Our Puritan ancestors had a strong infusion of this element in their composition. If they saw any one doing what they thought to be morally wrong, they felt an almost irresistible impulse to go and stop him by force. It was that which led to such acts as the persecution of the Quakers, that hung the witches at Salem, and placed the "Blue Laws" upon the statute books of Massachusetts and Connecticut, which provided among other things, against bonnets of too large a size, and clothing of an improper cut. Now we have inherited more or less of this tendency from our ancestors, and now and then it is apt to come out and show itself. But it is a wrong tendency, and one which we ought to restrain, and not indulge.

As we all acknowledge, it is not for one man to impose upon another *his* conscience as a rule of conduct; how much less proper, then, would it be for one *community* to attempt to do this in relation to another? Each people must be left to work out its own destiny, under divine providence, in freedom, according to reason.

The constitutional or legal question once settled, and the line between freedom and slavery distinctly drawn, the course of action on this subject seems quite clear. Once remanded to the *moral* plane, we have free air, a bright sunshine, and

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

an open sea. We then have ample room for the employment of as much energy as any of us will have to spare, in the cause of Christian civilization and moral reform. The South is to be approached through the channels of rational conviction. Facts and arguments may be used; information may be accumulated, and intelligence diffused.

And we may add, that just so far as our method is calm, conciliatory, and kind, and our arguments candid and just, so far in all probability, will they reach their mark and be productive of good. Denunciations uttered against their institutions and character, will not open their ears to our words of advice. On the other hand, they will close them. Such a course only drives them off, widens the breach between us, lessens our influence with them, and begets in them a repellent and defiant attitude of mind. There is a way of striking a man as violently with *words* as with actual blows; and experience proves that there are individuals and communities that will as indignantly repel a blow struck in one way as in the other.

Besides, it is a truth which we all ought to realize more than we do, that *truth alone* is not calculated to reform men, or to produce the best class of effects. *Truth*, even,—clear, indisputable truth, is not always the best weapon to fight with. When hurled forth in a condemnatory manner, like cannon balls from a battery, in a querulous and ill-natured spirit, such truths have but very little, if any, beneficial influence. To be operative of happy results, truths must be united to good; they must be sent forth in a spirit of love, and be tempered by its influences, and are *then* calculated not only to convince the reason, but also to regenerate and heal the life.

We must remember, too, that it is a greater sin to defame a community, than to speak ill of single individuals, inas-

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

much as in the former case the character of a larger number is involved.

Let us not, then, approach the South, in the first instance, with the charge, loudly made, that slavery is the worst of sins, and that slaveholders are sinners above all other men, that dwell in Jerusalem. For the sacred Scriptures nowhere bear us out in making such a charge. The slaveholders themselves do not believe it; they have inherited it from their fathers and were brought up in the midst of it; the church among them does not condemn the institution, but rather commends it. And instead of opening a door through which you might hold rational, friendly, and useful intercourse with them, you close their door against you; they look upon your charge of an offence, fall back upon their reserved rights, and search about for arguments and considerations to defend their position, confirming themselves in the whole thing more strongly than before. Do we not by this, impede the healthy movement and block the wheels of reform?

Let us, then, treat the men of the South as brethren, with leniency and forbearance. Remembering that times are in the hands of the Lord, and that we, in our finite prudence, are not the best judges as to how or when changes should come involving the organic structure of a great community, differing widely from ours, and the dearest interests of many millions of men. Let us give them time for reason to work, that they may see for themselves the defect of their own institution; the many corrupting influences to which it exposes them; and the enormous iniquities that are frequently committed under the cover of it.

Let us not refuse to fellowship the church of the South. Let us not denounce her for not declaring slaveholding to be a sin, and for not rejecting slave owners from her communion. Let not our ecclesiastical bodies divide—North and

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

South—on the question of slavery. For, in the providence of God, the church in the South is the medium through which renovation is to reach that community. Let us not try to weaken her then, or nullify her force. Let us not, by withholding from her our sympathy and aid, leave her to sink to a lower level in struggling amidst the evils that surround her. But let us retain our connection with her, and by wise counsels and considerate aid, help to strengthen her in her work. The only hope of good for the colored race of the South is in the christianization of the white race; and the only hope of christianizing the white race is by the increase and invigoration of the church there.

Let us then aid them by our precept, and by our example. By exhibiting to them in contrast with theirs, a better social system in all respects; a higher morality, a more perfect christianity. A morality, and a christianity, whose salient characteristic is that of humiliation and repentance on account of our own sins, rather than of condemnation of our neighbors on account of theirs. In this way we may continue to live together in harmony, and, so far as we are concerned, the National Union be preserved.

On the other hand, let the South also remember that all duties of brotherhood and companionship are mutual; and whatsoever rule of good conduct is binding upon us, is binding also upon them. And that they will have no right to complain of us for not fulfilling our part in the covenant of friendship and citizenship, if they on their side neglect theirs. The North has its rights which are to be respected, as well as the South.

Let those who seek to found the slave system upon the Bible, and who draw their sanctions for it from various passages of Holy Writ, also remember the obligations they are under to render their institution conformable to the requirements of the Bible. Let them remember that while the

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

Bible recognizes the mere relation of master and slave, it does not sanction the evil passions in which it originated, the selfishness with which it is too frequently carried on, nor one of the many abominations that wicked men are wont to practice under the system.

Amelioration ought to commence at once, and steadily proceed. A public opinion ought to be created at the South that will enforce the laws already on the statute book for the the protection of the slave; while many provisions of the slave code ought to be entirely re-written. Let the good men of the South labor quietly in the direction of reform until the rights of the servant are recognized by their laws;—his life, his limbs, his immunity from cruel punishments, his family relations. Give him room for the expansion of his growing manhood. And at length, when it is obvious the good of the whole community would be promoted by the change, complete emancipation becomes, not only a wise civil expedient, but also a moral duty.

[Then may the enfranchised and Christianized African say to his original enslavers, in the words of Joseph to his brethren, who had sold him into Egypt,—"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring it to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Gen. 50. 20.]

In closing, a single word remains to be said. We all know that *patriotism* is an important Christian virtue. It stands *third* in the order of our obligations. First, is the Lord; next, His Church; then, our country. There come times when, for the sake of their country, men are called upon to pledge their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor; then, to stand by those pledges; and, if need be, meet the sacrifices which those pledges involve. And if we may be justly called upon to devote our *lives*, and other im-

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

portant interests, of the cause of our country, tell me, Why not such minor things as popularity or position? This duty is equally binding upon you, and upon me. And while it belongs to you to fulfil this obligation, each according to his function, it belongs to me also to perform it according to mine. Let each one, in the place where he stands, utter himself according to his convictions, in the great cause of his country, in all time of her imminent peril. Let him do this regardless of consequences to himself.

It is from a consideration like this that I have been willing to step aside, on a single occasion, from the common path, to utter just *one word*, which I felt inwardly impelled to speak. If it be thought some slight injury, or a personal risk, for a minister to do this,—that is a sacrifice which I believe it is his solemn duty *sometimes* to make. It is one which for once I am willing to meet. It is an offering laid upon the altar of my country, in this her trying hour; when she is moved as she has not been before for three quarters of a century, and may not be again for a life-time. An offering which I have feared to withhold, lest I should be found among those who are willing to yield up their sense of right and duty in a weak subserviency to mere policy, or the passing fears of the hour. An offering—made, I trust, in some degree of sympathy with *that spirit* which carried our fathers through the war of the revolution, which succeeded to lay the foundations of this government, which has consolidated the Union;—into which you and I, my brethren, have been educated from infancy;—a spirit—by which alone any union can ever be preserved, or popular government long maintained.

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM